

A Word from the Pastor

Dear Christ-Only Saints,

On February 12, 1564, Michelangelo became very ill while working on the Rondanini Pieta. Three days later as he lay on his death bed, he sent for his closest friends. Michelangelo asked them to read the story of Christ's crucifixion again and again. Over the next three days, they read to him. He died on February 18th. Because of his renown, the entire artistic world attended his funeral. He was buried in Florence, although the Pope had a memorial erected in his memory at St. Peter's. All of Italy and the realm of the Catholic church mourned his passing.

Imagine lying on your deathbed for days. As your friends and family gather around you, what might go through your mind? What might bring solace to your heart as you near the end of life's journey? Michelangelo was 88 years old when he died. He had lived a life beyond any that most people can imagine. As he lay in his bed surrounded by student ways, fellow artists, and those who were his closest associates, he chose to have the story of the crucifixion read repeatedly rather than reminisce about his past life. This is truly a remarkable story.

Many of us have participated in bedside vigils and can probably barely remember what was done or said in the time before a loved one's passing. I daresay that few will report a long period of scripture reading done so at the request of the person who was ill. Michelangelo's choice to have the crucifixion story read repeatedly could be a way to grow closer to God through the reminder of who Christ is and what he did for us on that day.

What will we think? What will we say? Will we be at peace? Will we brood? Will we decide to pray or even meditate continuously during our final days? Perhaps we can, if we are mentally able, think of the needs of others and what we can still do for them. One suggestion might be to focus our thoughts on our faith in Jesus by reading Galatians 2:20: "and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

I encourage you to not wait until your last days to focus on a particular scripture or aspect of Jesus' teachings. Take time to pray. Take time to read something that affirms your belief in God and the Son sent to save us all.

Michelangelo could have chosen 1 Corinthians 2:2 to be read repeatedly as an acknowledgment of what he seemed to feel in his heart. In 1 Corinthians 2:2 we read: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Dennis